

NEWS RELEASE

**OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS**

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For Immediate Release

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United States Attorney RONALD J. TENPAS announced today that his office reached a settlement with **Southwestern Illinois Plastic and Hand Surgery (“SIPHS”)**, a plastic surgery practice in Edwardsville, Illinois. **SIPHS** has paid the United States \$25,000 to resolve allegations in a civil lawsuit which contended that it submitted improper and inappropriate claims to the federally funded Medicare health insurance programs.

The settlement arose from a federal whistleblower complaint in which **Dr. Ragharum Elluru**, a doctor previously associated with **SIPHS** alleged that **SIPHS** submitted false claims to Medicare. The complaint alleged that **SIPHS** submitted claims which were false in that they contained a false description of the service provided by employees of **SIPHS** and, based on that false description, sought reimbursement to which **SIPHS** was not entitled. In particular, the complaint alleged that **SIPHS** submitted claims for patient evaluation and management services which represented that **SIPHS’s** employees had performed more complex evaluation and management services than they had actually performed. **Dr. Elluru’s** complaint also contained other counts which were not included in the conduct covered by the settlement. The settlement provides for the dismissal of all counts of the complaint which allege the submission of false claims to Medicare. **SIPHS** has denied any intentional improper billing of Medicare.

The case was handled by Assistant United States Attorney Gerald M. Burke and Paralegal Specialist Paul Fairbanks.